

The Ceriale Center for Cornell Health

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Overview

Cornell University recognizes hazing as a serious public health issue that affects every member of our community. Hazing encompasses a range of practices that pose risks to the physical safety and psychological well-being of individuals joining or continuing membership in various clubs, organizations, teams, and other groups. The impact of hazing on individuals can be severe, long-lasting, and even fatal.

- Cornell uses a comprehensive, public health approach that addresses individuals, groups, the institutional level, the local community, national organizations and the broader society.
- This document provides details of our public health approach to hazing that supports our campus efforts, along with key examples of our strategies including programs, policies, services and other initiatives designed to prevent, educate, and respond to the problem.
- Cornell has implemented several key strategies including engaging key stakeholders, educational efforts that promote bystander intervention, transparency regarding violations, consistent enforcement, various communication strategies including visible leadership statements and the first known hazing prevention social norms campaign.

Leadership & culture change strategies

- *Visible leadership statements:* Clear leadership messages from senior university officials and student leaders provide a clear commitment to addressing hazing and the philosophical foundation for Cornell's comprehensive approach to hazing prevention.
- *National Hazing Prevention Collaborative:* Cornell University participated in Stop Hazing's first cohort of the Hazing Prevention Consortium (HPC) from 2013–2016 led by Dr. Elizabeth Allan at the University of Maine.
- *Health Promoting Campus:* Cornell University formally adopted the international Okanagan Charter in 2022 to become a Health Promoting Campus. Cornell's vision is to create and sustain a diverse, welcoming, and inclusive culture in which students, staff, and faculty can flourish.
- *Commitment and core values:* Cornell recognizes that health and well-being of students (undergraduate, graduate, and



Cornell's comprehensive public health approach to hazing

professional) is foundational for academic and life success. In 2019, Cornell University adopted a set of core values that serve as the foundation for a more equitable and inclusive atmosphere for all Cornell campuses, including a community of belonging where students, faculty, and staff can learn, innovate, and work in an environment of respect.

Policy initiatives

- Cornell University first established its institutional policy on hazing in 2001. The policy has since been updated and is currently reflected in the Student Code of Conduct.
- In 2012, the new member process for Interfraternity Council fraternities and PanHellenic Council sororities was shortened from eight weeks to four weeks.
- *Cornell's Good Samaritan Protocol:* Hazing activities sometimes involve alcohol or other drugs. Cornell's Good Samaritan Protocol and New York State's Good Samaritan Law encourage students to call for help in alcohol or other drug emergencies. When students call for help – on or off campus – for an alcohol- or other drug-related medical emergency, Good Sam protects the person who calls and the person in need of medical attention from judicial and legal consequences for underage drinking, use of other drugs, or other disorderly conduct. [See goodsam.cornell.edu].



Educational initiatives

- *Skorton Center for Health Initiatives:* Provides institutional leadership related to bystander intervention and hazing prevention education for students, staff, and faculty, creates social norms campaigns, and collects and uses data to inform educational initiatives.
- *Media communication:* Advertisements, posters, fact sheets, social media campaigns, and webpages promote healthy group bonding, positive social norms, reporting options for hazing along with educating the community about hazing and the availability of campus resources to address hazing concerns. Cornell University developed and implemented the first known hazing prevention social norms campaign.
- *Intervene:* An award-winning 20-minute video and corresponding interactive workshop teach students how to apply a key set of bystander intervention skills to real-life situations. A series of brief scenarios show college student bystanders actively intervening to reduce the risk of problems, including sexual assault, harassment, intimate partner violence, hazing, bias, emotional distress, and alcohol emergencies. A hazing scenario shows a roommate recognizing signs of hazing, talking with his roommate about it and making a confidential report to the University. [See health.cornell.edu/intervene.]
- *Education and training:* Staff members from the Skorton Center for Health Initiatives routinely provide training for key campus stakeholders including residential student staff, student athletes, students in the Greek community, health center staff, athletic coaches and trainers, and advisors to clubs, teams, and organizations.

Positive team-building

- Groups, teams, and organizations have an underlying need for developing trust and strong group cohesion. There are ways to produce group solidarity and positive team-building without hazing. Ideas for healthy recruitment and group-building activities are

described on the hazing.cornell.edu website including community service and philanthropy activities, service learning trips, mentoring opportunities, outdoor challenges, athletic competitions, history and values exercises, etc.

- *Cornell Outdoor Education (COE):* Cornell University staff are trained to lead students through exercises at the University's state-of-the-art challenge course and indoor climbing wall. COE also provides athletic equipment rentals to students.
- Skorton Center staff provide educational trainings for student leaders involved in welcoming new members into their organizations. Trainings have been provided for new member educators of Greek chapters, leaders of professional fraternities, varsity athletes, and student leaders of other types of organizations.

Reporting options

- *Hazing at Cornell website:* Cornell created the first ever university website dedicated to hazing, which provides a vehicle for education, submitting reports of hazing and public display of violations. [See hazing.cornell.edu].
- *Reporting Options:* Cornell community members (students, staff, faculty, alumni, parents/family members) can make an online report of hazing or make a telephone report to a university staff member. [See hazing.cornell.edu/reporting].

Enforcement

- The Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards, the Division of Public Safety (including the Cornell University Police Department), Sorority and Fraternity Life, Athletics and Physical Education, and the Campus Activities Office strive for clear and consistent enforcement of campus policies and state and federal laws. These departments collaborate as needed when investigating hazing reports and adjudicating sanctions. Consistent enforcement and swift and firm consequences are important components in preventing future hazing incidents.

Support for those who are hazed

- *Victim Advocacy Program:* Advocates provide client-centered services to students after a hazing incident through support, connection to resources, information, academic considerations, and provision of reporting options.
- *Hazing at Cornell:* This comprehensive website provides information about helping a friend, the availability of medical and counseling services, as well as other support and reporting options.
- *Cornell Health:* Staff members provide a collaborative approach to health care. Medical and mental health professionals work together to identify and provide care for students who have experienced hazing.

Transparency regarding violations

- Public disclosure of violations and corresponding sanctions are transparently displayed on Cornell's hazing website since the 2004–2005 academic year. This allows anyone (students, staff, faculty, parents/families, community members, alumni) the ability to learn about the history of a group, team, or organization in order to help make an informed decision about whether or not to join.

Marchell, T. C., Santacrose, L. B., Laurita, A. C., & Allan, E. J. (2022). A public health approach to preventing hazing on a university campus. *Journal of American College Health, 72*(1), 118–127. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2021.2024210>